



Maggie's Activity Pack

Name _____

Date _____

The Words Are Taking Shape: Writing Concrete Poetry

There are many kinds of poetry. A poet may write a haiku. This is a 17 syllable, 3 line poem. It is usually about nature. Poets may also write cinquains. These are 5 line poems with 22 syllables. There are other kinds of poems, too. You can write a picture poem. This is called a concrete poem.

The words in a concrete poem take the shape of something. Think about an interesting shape. Then list words that tell about this shape.

Maggie was riding over a bridge. She thought this structure would make an interesting poem. She took out her notebook and wrote words that described the bridge. Here is what she wrote:

An illustration of a spiral-bound notebook with a pencil resting on it. The notebook has five words written on it: 'Spanning', 'Straddling', 'Swinging', 'Connecting', and 'Passing'. To the right of the notebook is a cartoon girl wearing a hat and a backpack, looking thoughtful. A speech bubble from her says, 'Now I need to make these words look like a bridge. What should I do?'. Another speech bubble from her says, 'I know! It means if you multiply 60 by 10, the answer is 600. You don't even need paper and pencil to figure that out!'.

Spanning

Straddling

Swinging

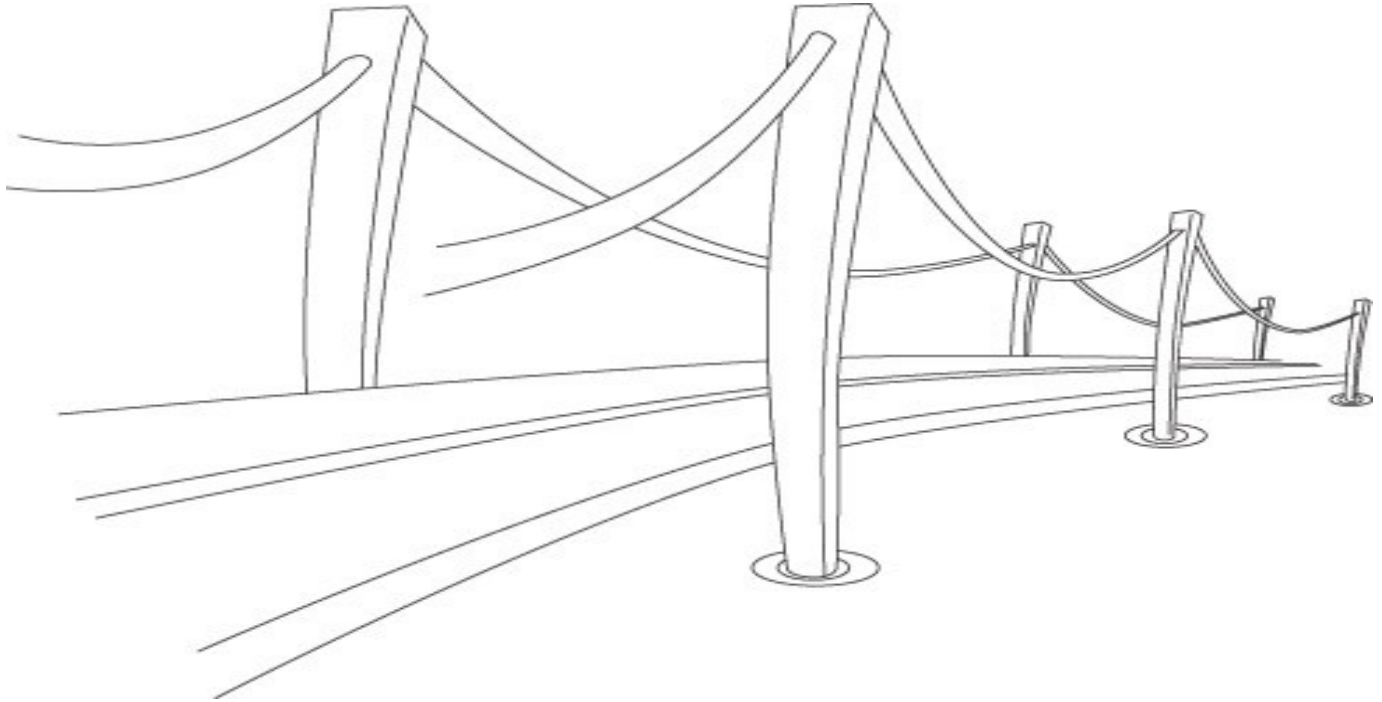
Connecting

Passing

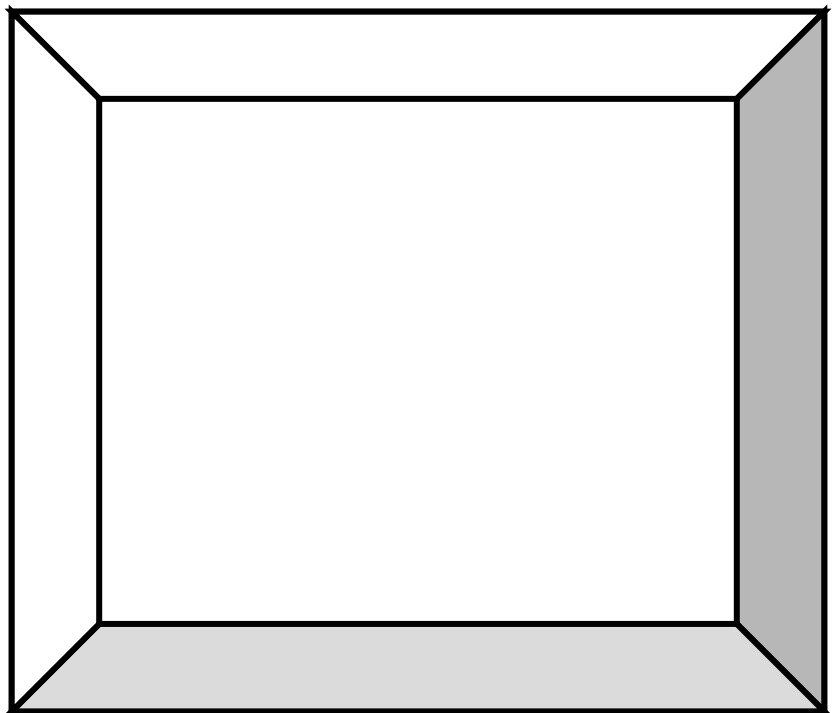
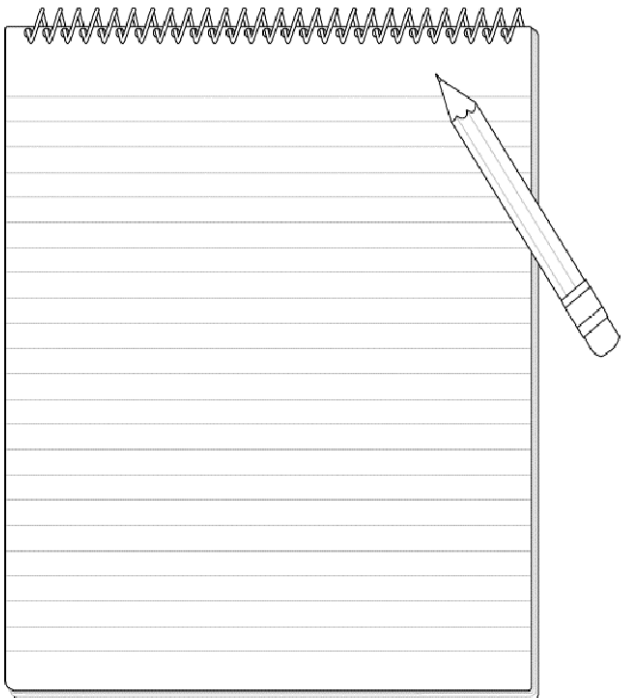
Now I need to make these words look like a bridge. What should I do?

I know! It means if you multiply 60 by 10, the answer is 600. You don't even need paper and pencil to figure that out!

You can find a picture or drawing of the shape. Below is a bridge. Put Maggie's words into the drawing. Use your imagination! You can spread out the letters. You can write them up and down. See how creative you can be with Maggie's words!



Now it's YOUR turn to write a concrete poem. What shape will you choose?
_____. Make a list of the words
that describe this shape. Then draw your shape in the frame. Put in the words.



Dear Colleague,

Through the years we, at Maggie's Earth Adventures, have celebrated National Poetry Month in many different ways. In our archive you will find examples of the types of poetry discussed in this WAP's opening along with limericks and of my "special" rhyming "ditties"! So many of us like to share poetry with children but then we experience problems when our elementary-age children attempt to become budding poets. Children often have difficulty (as do many of us) grasping the nuances of writing a quality poem. Thus, we like to share more structured poetry, such as these forms, with you. When given a basic structure, I find more young children are willing to experiment with words and are more successful with their unique creations. Introducing children to concrete poetry can help reinforce the notion that poems give us pictures. The carefully chosen words of the poet are woven together to allow the reader to visualize what the poet is seeing. This key element of poetry can be "taught" by introducing your class to concrete poems. It would be fun to have the children cut out letters of words and manipulate these letters to form shapes on the desk or table tops. This allows for word play and helps to reinforce the idea that poets are painting word pictures.

As a meaningful yet fun end-of-the-year project, why not create a class concrete poem? Have the class decide on an object that exemplifies your year together. I know that one of my classes would likely have chosen a suitcase as we "traveled" around the world, "visiting" different continents each month. Each child would then choose a special word that is meaningful to his or her participation in the class. Then challenge the group to "weave" these words together to form a suitcase (or whatever picture your students have chosen). Perhaps you can even do this in 3-D format. Whatever image your class decides to use as a symbol of your time together, you may want to maximize this picture and resulting poem to display for all to see. I suggest preserving this poem and using it as part of your welcome to your new class as you begin a new school year. This is one of those exciting "foreshadowing" ways to get your new students excited about all they will do in your class as the school year ensues.

Happy teaching,
Kathy

Answers will vary.

Goals:

Students will read directions showing how to write a concrete poem. Ideas are provided for children to create a poem about a bridge. Using this model, students are encouraged to write their own concrete poem. Ideas for expansion of this poetry form are provided in the Dear Colleague letter. This activity is available on the intermediate, primary, and emergent levels. It correlates with the IRA/NCTE Standard, "Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes."